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## **STRENGTH TRAINING TO INCREASE FLEXIBILITY: THE "FEEL GOOD" WORKOUT.**

**by Nick Holtzman**

**For this article, I am going to include a workout that I have been doing with many of my clients lately. It is not too different than your standard full body strength workout; it just focuses on different aspects of the movements.**

**Many of my clients battle muscle stiffness and tightness on a regular basis; I am sure that personal trainers can relate to this from their own clients. Many of them are hesitant to participate in activities such as golf the day after a strength workout, for fear that their muscles will be stiff and tight from the previous day's workout. The common myth that many people still believe is that strength training will make them less flexible.**

**The reality of it, however, is that when most of these men/women perform their strength training exercises, they are doing them in a limited range of motion, i.e. not getting the full stretch from the negative aspect of the movement. They are placing a great deal of stress on their muscles but in a limited range of motion, thereby making it more difficult to move the body through its full range of motion in their everyday lives.**

**It was with this in mind that I started doing the following workout with many of my clients. While most of our workouts tend to be hardcore, fat burning workout aimed at increasing the heart rate and burning calories, the following workout is geared towards the stretch portion of the movement, or the "negative" part. I call it the "Feel Good" workout (not every client thought that it was an accurate title), because the movement is slowed down and focused on the stretch as opposed to the lift, giving your body a nice stretch and muscle lengthening.**

**What I found was that my clients also built up a big sweat and a large calorie burn from the workout. I had many clients asking me to print up a copy of the workout so they could do it on their own. Some even felt a noticeable difference in their athletic activities following the workout. One of my most athletically active clients, Mike Demchenko, noted that the workout "was a great change of pace. The emphasis on the form helped me get the most of the exercises. I noticed a difference in my explosiveness and energy level in my activities for a number of days after the workout. I felt I could get more out of my workouts following the "negative" workout."**

Here is the "Feel Good" or "Negative" workout. It took place in a gym, so feel free to get creative if you do not have certain equipment at your gym or at your home (or better yet, shoot me an email ([Nanthony13@yahoo.com](mailto:Nanthony13@yahoo.com)) if you have any questions on the exercises). I have included pictures and brief descriptions. The workout itself is fairly basic, nothing fancy. The most important things to remember are:

- Slow the descending, or "negative" motion of the movement down to about half speed.
- Focus on the stretch of the muscles being worked; hold and sustain for about one second.
- Use significantly less weight than you normally would for the exercises; sometimes your own bodyweight is all you need.
- I recommend about 12-15 reps per exercise.

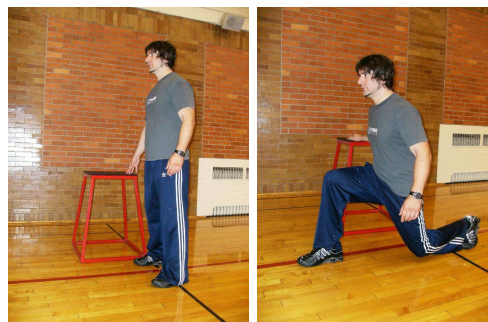
#### THE WORKOUT:

#### STABILITY BALL SQUAT



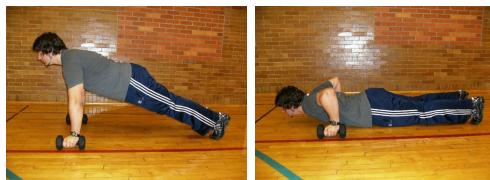
- Place Stability Ball behind low back; descend all the way down until legs are slightly past parallel with the ground.
- Add a medicine ball for a little resistance, but remember not to go heavy.

#### FORWARD LUNGE



- Start with a hand on a rail or sturdy object; take the balance component out of the exercise since we are focusing on the stretch.
- Lower yourself until your forward leg is completely parallel with the ground; opposite knee about an inch from the floor.

## **PUSHUP**



- Use pushup handles or sturdy dumbbells to descend even lower than a normal pushup, focusing the stretch all the way across the chest and shoulders.

## **DUMBBELL PULLOVER**



- Make sure your back is straight in a "table top" position.
- Keep arms as straight as possible, and lower until you feel a full stretch in the lats (right underneath the arms).

## **DUMBBELL ROTATIONS**



- Eyes ahead, full range of motion from low to high.

## **CALF RAISE/STRETCH**



- **By now you may be feeling a bit winded from the Dumbbell Rotations, so the next exercise is a calf stretch; a little less strenuous. We are using a standard stretch box here, but anything as simple as a stair may be just as effective.**

## **STABILITY BALL CRUNCH/STRETCH**



- **Make sure you are getting a good stretch in the abdominals and ribcage.**

## **LOW AB LEG LIFT/STRETCH**



- **Lay flat on a bench or on a mat; make sure your toes are pointed away from you- focus on the lower abdominal stretch**

## **BICEP CURL**



- **Lay on an Incline Bench.**
- **Make sure arms are straight, with palms facing straight ahead.**

## **LOW BACK RAISE/STRETCH**



- **Make sure your back is straight.**
- **Focus on your low back and hamstring stretch.**

**I have been recommending this workout at least every month or every 2 weeks to some of my clients. Try it out yourself and let me know what you think! Feel free to drop me an email ([Nanthony13@yahoo.com](mailto:Nanthony13@yahoo.com)) with comments, opinions, or suggestions.**